



Education and Training
Inspectorate

ApprenticeshipsNI Provision in
Transport Training Services (NI)
Limited

Report of an Inspection
in June 2018



The Education and Training Inspectorate
Promoting Improvement

Providing inspection services for:

Department of Education
Department for the Economy
and other commissioning Departments

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Contents

Section	Page
1. Context	1
2. Views of apprentices	1
3. Focus of the inspection	1
4. Overall findings of the inspection	1
5. Outcomes for learners	3
6. Quality of provision	4
7. Leadership and management	5
8. Safeguarding	6
9. Overall effectiveness	6

Appendix

- A. Programme registrations
- B. Inspection methodology and evidence base
- C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

1. Context

Transport Training Services (NI) Limited (Transport Training Services) is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Transport Training Board for Northern Ireland, a private company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Transport Training Services is managed by a non-executive chairperson and three company executive directors, all of whom comprise the senior management team. Two members of the senior management team, including the chief executive officer, are directly involved in the delivery of training programmes. The chief executive officer is supported by a training manager, seven full-time and four part-time tutors, a careers development officer and five support team members.

Transport Training Services delivers training from its purpose-built training facility at Nutts Corner, Antrim and specialises in providing industry-standard training and professional development for the transport industry across Northern Ireland (NI). It is contracted by the Department for the Economy (Department) to provide the ApprenticeshipsNI programme¹. At the time of the inspection, 160 apprentices were registered across the professional and technical area of transportation operations and maintenance. Only a small number (1%) of them have a disability or avail of any additional learning support.

2. Views of apprentices

As part of the evaluation of Transport Training Service's arrangements for care, guidance and support and for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults, the apprentices completed an online questionnaire prior to the inspection. The returns were low (11%) but largely positive; they contained no written responses or comments. During the inspection, however, almost all of the apprentices interviewed reported positively on their experiences in the organisation.

In addition, inspectors met with a focus group of eleven apprentices. The apprentices reported that they have positive relationships with their tutors, they feel well supported and that the training provided is matched well to the work they undertake in the workplace; they report that they have good opportunities to develop their occupational skills and to make progress in their learning.

3. Focus of the inspection

The inspection focused on the:

- outcomes for learners;
- quality of provision; and
- effectiveness of the leadership and management.

4. Overall findings of the inspection

Overall effectiveness	Important areas for improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good
Quality of provision	Important areas for improvement
Leadership and management	Important areas for improvement

¹ Programme registration data provided by the organisation at the time of the inspection is included in the Appendix of this report.

Overall quality of the programmes inspected		
Programme	Proportion of registrations	Performance level
ApprenticeshipsNI	100%	Important areas for improvement

Overall quality of the professional and technical areas inspected ² and the essential skills provision	
Essential skills	Requires urgent improvement
Transportation operations and maintenance	Very good

KEY FINDINGS

Strengths

- The very good standards of occupational skills and knowledge demonstrated by most of the apprentices.
- The very good (89%) retention rate and outstanding progression rate (95%) from level 2 to level 3 training in transportation operations and maintenance, and the outstanding (100%) achievement rates, in both transportation operations and maintenance and the essential skills, over the past three years.
- The curriculum offer in transportation operations and maintenance which provides a broad range of specialist pathways to meet the varied training needs of young people and employers across NI.
- The mostly well-equipped training facilities, providing the apprentices with ready access to contemporary digital learning resources, industry-standard equipment and vehicles with integrated modern technology.
- The extensive range of links and partnerships established with employers, vehicle manufacturer franchises and other industry stakeholders to support the delivery of the apprenticeship programme.

Areas for improvement

- Address the lack of provision for the essential skills for the current apprentices.
- Review and further develop the processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning across the organisation.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management at operational level and develop more robust and cohesive management information systems and associated processes to improve the quality of the provision.

² A representative sample of professional and technical areas, agreed with the organisation, was selected for inspection.

5. Outcomes for learners

Most of the apprentices demonstrate very good standards of occupational skills and knowledge, an increasing self-confidence and a positive disposition to learning and development. They work to the expected industry standard and are able to apply well their knowledge and skills in practical training and in the workplace. The evidence in their e-portfolios shows that they can read and interpret information from a variety of sources and their written work is mostly well presented. A majority of the apprentices interviewed have good oral communication skills, use appropriate technical language and speak with confidence and clarity about their training, and about the techniques they are using to complete their work.

In the practical sessions and workplace training observed, the apprentices work independently or as part of a team to complete tasks such as repairing brakes, diagnosing oil leaks, repairing audio systems, rebuilding engines or diagnosing and rectifying faults in engines and auxiliary systems. They benefit from a good range of training experiences and a small number of them have their own work bays in the workplace. In addition, a small number of apprentices show a commitment to their training through investing heavily in acquiring their own tools and toolboxes.

Over the past three years, in transportation operations and maintenance, the retention rate is very good (89%) and all of those apprentices who completed their programme achieved. A particular strength of the provision is that almost all (95%) of the apprentices progressed from level 2 to level 3 training.

Over the same period, all of the apprentices who completed their essentials skills achieved their targeted qualification. It is a concern, however, that there is no evidence of progression in the essential skills for those apprentices who are not exempt and who joined the programme since September 2016.

While opportunities exist for the apprentices to apply their numeracy and ICT skills in their professional and technical training sessions and in the workplace, these are not being fully enough exploited to facilitate the apprentices' completion of the essential skills in a contextualised manner, for example, when measuring, using data, using bespoke ICT systems to complete job cards or using online data manuals.

Most of the apprentices are making good or better progress in their learning and in the development of their wider skills and dispositions. Most display initiative, manage their time well, are keen to learn, demonstrate effective team working skills and maturity, and display positive attitudes when working with others. They are developing good levels of independent working and can identify when they need to seek advice from their technician or master technician. Most of the apprentices in heavy vehicle demonstrate independence and resilience through travelling to England several times a year to complete their directed training. A small number of the apprentices require support and more opportunities to develop their customer service skills, for example, when communicating with customers regarding vehicle faults or problems.

6. Quality of provision

The curriculum provision in transportation operations and maintenance is well-designed and provides the apprentices with very good opportunities to develop their occupational skills and knowledge. Appropriately, this includes the opportunity for a significant minority of them to undertake specialist vehicle manufacturer modules to support progression to technician status. The curriculum comprises a broad range of specialist pathways, including light vehicle repair, heavy vehicle repair, body repair and refinishing and motorcycle repair to meet the varied training needs of employers and young people across Northern Ireland.

Training is delivered in blocks which are well-planned to allow the apprentices to progress in their learning and occupational skills development; they report that there are good links between their training and the work they are undertaking in their workplace. While appropriate processes are in place to track and monitor the progress the apprentices are making in their professional and technical learning and training, including linkages between their personal training plans, e-portfolios, end of block reviews and the organisation's milestone tracker, these processes are disjointed, lack cohesion and need to be more effectively integrated to provide a more holistic overview of each apprentice's progress.

It is a concern that no curriculum provision is currently in place for the three essential skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT. Almost one-half (46%) of the apprentices need to undertake one or more of the essential skills but have not as yet been provided with access to this provision.

The quality of the learning, teaching and training observed in the professional and technical area, along with the arrangements for assessment, were mostly good or very good. It is noteworthy that there is a sharp focus on building the apprentices' capability to diagnose and solve problems from the outset of their training. In the best practice, there was: evidence of stretch and challenge and in-depth questioning to underpin and reinforce a sound understanding of the apprentices' underpinning knowledge; naturally occurring assessment for learning; an excellent use of cut-away components to explain theory concepts; good use of high quality electronic learning resources; a clear link to workshop practice; the provision of extension tasks for more able apprentices; and high levels of engagement and good quality responses from all of the apprentices. In the less effective practice, in a small number of the sessions observed, the pace was slow, there was insufficient differentiation, engagement by the apprentices was passive and questioning by the tutors was poor.

The care and welfare impacts positively on the learning, teaching and training for the apprentices. Those interviewed reported that they have positive relationships with staff, they feel safe and any issues raised are quickly resolved. The organisation also works closely with employers, all of whom comment positively on the quality of training and support provided by Transport Training Services, to ensure that the apprentices are content in the workplace and getting an appropriate level and range of training opportunities. While an appropriate induction process is in place for the apprentices, no formal arrangements are in place for their initial and diagnostic assessment. This needs to be addressed and there is also a need to review the post-induction arrangements and pastoral support in place for those apprentices who travel to England on a regular basis to undertake heavy vehicle training. In addition, the organisation should consider the provision of a planned programme in the area of the preventative curriculum to further support all of the apprentices, in areas such as financial capability, how to stay safe and healthy and maintaining healthy relationships.

The arrangements for the provision of careers education, information, advice and guidance need to be better planned and more formalised. While most of the apprentices interviewed are aware of career progression pathways beyond level 3, their awareness stems more from information from employers than from the careers advice provided within the organisation. It is important that all of the apprentices have access to well-informed, impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance, including an awareness of alternative pathways outside the immediate motor vehicle industry; this is particularly relevant for those apprentices in smaller independent garages or who plan to set up their own business. It is timely that the organisation has recently appointed a careers development officer and work has begun, including one-to-one careers advice meetings with apprentices, to progress further this important aspect of provision.

Through its developing links with local post-primary schools, Transport Training Services has put in place a 'Maths in Action' programme to provide pupils with an insight into what a motor vehicle apprenticeship entails and how mathematics can be applied when solving problems in real-life situations.

7. Leadership and management

Since the previous inspection, Transport Training Services has undergone significant change at all levels across the organisation, including: the appointment of an entirely new senior management team; re-structuring of the organisation at all levels; the recruitment of a new training team and support staff; and a review of the training provision. Senior management have demonstrated a strong commitment to the organisation and have been proactive in developing a clear strategic vision and long-term plan to effect change through the implementation of a number of key strategic priorities.

As a consequence, considerable work has been done over the past two years to transform the organisation and consolidate the training provision. This includes: improved employer engagement, including the development of an extensive range of links and partnerships and new contracts with employers and vehicle manufacturer franchises; a significant increase in the number of apprentices recruited; an investment in key facilities such as new equipment and e-portfolios to underpin the training provision; and the development of links with local post-primary schools. Management report that the work done has resulted in improved stability, financial viability, and sustainability for the organisation which now has a strong base upon which to build going forward.

At both senior and operational level, however, more work needs to be done to ensure that the training provided by the organisation fully delivers all the required elements of the apprenticeship frameworks and meets the needs of all of the apprentices. The provision for the essential skills requires urgent improvement. Management need, as a matter of urgency, to develop an essential skills policy that sets out clearly the delivery model for the revised standards, qualifications and assessment arrangements so that the apprentices can attain their essential skills qualifications in an appropriately timely and coherent manner. There is a need to: ensure that long and short-term planning is in place that addresses adequately the refreshed essential skills curriculum and outlines the learning and teaching strategies to be used in the successful delivery of the essential skills provision. In addition, there needs to be appropriate processes for the initial and diagnostic assessment of the apprentices on entry to training, and to also ensure that appropriately qualified staff are in place. Overall, there is a need to improve significantly the management and curricular leadership of the essential skills provision, including the processes for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning.

The transportation operations and maintenance provision is effective in providing a growing and significant number of young people with access to recognised apprenticeship training and progression to stable employment. There is a need, however, to develop further the provision in vehicle accident body repair and paint, and in the heavy vehicle maintenance and repair for non-franchised dealerships, where the numbers of apprentices recruited are currently low.

The training facilities are of a high quality, are well-equipped and provide the apprentices with ready access to contemporary digital learning resources, industry-standard equipment and vehicles with integrated modern technology. There is a need, however, to continue to improve the training facilities for heavy vehicle for the small number of apprentices not attending the specialist manufacturers' programmes in England. Staff are experienced and qualified and have good opportunities to undertake relevant continuing professional development.

There is a need to develop and implement more effective, coherent management information systems and processes to support programme delivery and management. The channels of communication between staff, and the analysis and use of key performance data by management and staff, particularly at operational level, are also under-developed and in need of improvement.

The processes used for self-evaluation and quality improvement planning are in need of further development. The associated documentation needs to align much more closely with the latest guidance. The use and analysis of data is limited, the content of the self-evaluation process is overly descriptive in nature and does not evaluate sufficiently the quality of the provision, the actions identified to address the areas for improvement are not specific enough and the targets against which progress can be measured are too limited. Quality improvement planning in the professional and technical area of transportation operations and maintenance, and in the essential skills, is also weak.

8. Safeguarding

Based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the arrangements for safeguarding apprentices reflects broadly the guidance issued by the Department. However, the organisation needs to:

- ensure that all specified staff and board member training is carried out as soon as possible;
- update the safeguarding policy to reflect current regulations and best practice; and
- communicate more effectively the organisation's safeguarding policy and associated procedures to parents/carers, employers and other key stakeholders.

9. Overall effectiveness

Transport Training Services needs to address important areas for improvement in the interest of all the apprentices. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection within 18 months.

Programme registrations

Table 1 - Current registrations by programme

Programme	Numbers of registrations	% of total registrations
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 2	105	66%
ApprenticeshipsNI Level 3	55	34%

Table 2 - Current registrations by professional and technical area

Professional and technical area	Number of apprentices		% of total registrations
	Level 2	Level 3	
Transportation operations and maintenance			100%
Driving goods vehicles	10	0	6%
Heavy vehicle maintenance and repair	22	22	28%
Light vehicle maintenance and repair	62	28	56%
Motorcycle maintenance and repair	2	2	3%
Vehicle accident repair body	2	1	1%
Vehicle accident repair paint	7	2	6%

Table 3 - Qualifications of current trainees/apprentices on entry to their programme

Programme	Training for Success (%)	ApprenticeshipsNI (%)
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C including English and mathematics	-	54%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	-	73%
(%) of learners with GCSE English or equivalent at grades A*-C	-	67%
(%) of learners with GCSE mathematics or equivalent at grades A*-C	-	73%
(%) of learners with 4 or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	-	98%
(%) of learners with no prior level 1 or level 2 qualifications	-	2%

B. Inspection methodology and evidence base

The ETI's Inspection and Self-Evaluation Framework is available on the ETI website www.etini.gov.uk.

Four ETI inspectors observed 16 apprentices in five directed training sessions. They also visited 18 apprentices in the workplace and interviewed eleven of them in a focus group meeting. In addition, discussions were held with ten employers and one employer body representative was spoken with by telephone. Samples of the apprentices' work and personal training plans and tutors' schemes of work and lesson plans were examined. The organisation's self-evaluation report, quality improvement plan and other relevant documentation were also scrutinised.

C. Reporting terms used by the Education and Training Inspectorate

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

Performance levels

The ETI use the following performance levels when reporting on outcomes for learners, quality of provision and on leadership and management.

Outstanding
Very good
Good
Important area(s) for improvement
Requires significant improvement
Requires urgent improvement

Overall effectiveness

The ETI use one of the following inspection outcomes when evaluating the overall effectiveness of the organisation:

The organisation has a high level of capacity for sustained improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation demonstrates the capacity to identify and bring about improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor how the organisation sustains improvement.
The organisation needs to address (an) important area(s) for improvement in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the area(s) for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.
The organisation needs to address urgently the significant areas for improvement identified in the interest of all the learners. The ETI will monitor and report on the organisation's progress in addressing the areas for improvement. There will be a formal follow-up inspection.

Key Performance Indicators and Definitions	
Retention	The percentage of enrolments measured over the full duration of their programme.
Achievement	The percentage of participants who completed their targeted individual outcomes.
Progression	The percentage of successful completers who achieved positive progression.

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